

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 7 June 2026

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Partially  
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## # Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Management of Dingoes

### ## Executive Summary

- \* Dingoes (\*Canis dingo\*) are Australia's only remaining widespread terrestrial apex predator and perform a critical ecological function.
- \* Scientific evidence demonstrates that dingoes help regulate populations of herbivores and suppress invasive mesopredators such as foxes and feral cats.
- \* The loss or broad-scale suppression of dingoes can trigger trophic cascades, resulting in ecological imbalance, increased grazing pressure, vegetation decline and greater predation on native wildlife.
- \* Healthy dingo populations contribute to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem resilience and the maintenance of natural ecological processes.
- \* Recognition of dingoes as an ecologically important native species is consistent with contemporary ecosystem-based management principles.
- \* Livestock protection concerns can be addressed through targeted and evidence-based management rather than broad-scale eradication programs.
- \* NSW should strengthen protections for dingoes and ensure that future management frameworks appropriately recognise their ecological value.

### ## The Ecological Importance of Dingoes as Apex Predators in New South Wales

#### ### Introduction

I support the protection and conservation of dingoes (\*Canis dingo\*) in New South Wales on ecological, biodiversity and land management grounds. Dingoes are Australia's largest remaining terrestrial apex predator and perform a critical role in maintaining ecosystem function across a wide range of landscapes.

The available scientific evidence indicates that healthy dingo populations contribute to ecological balance by regulating herbivore populations, suppressing invasive mesopredators, and promoting greater biodiversity. As Australia faces ongoing biodiversity decline and increasing environmental pressures, the ecological services provided by dingoes should be recognised and protected.

#### ### Dingoes as Apex Predators

Apex predators occupy the highest trophic level in an ecosystem and exert significant influence on the abundance and behaviour of prey species and smaller

predators. Numerous studies have demonstrated that apex predators can shape ecosystem structure through top-down regulation.

In Australia, dingoes are uniquely positioned to fulfil this ecological role. Since the extinction or decline of many large native predators, dingoes remain the only widespread terrestrial apex predator capable of regulating populations of large herbivores and invasive predators across extensive landscapes.

The ecological importance of apex predators is well established internationally. The recovery of wolves in North America and large carnivores in Europe has demonstrated how predator restoration can improve ecosystem health, vegetation condition and biodiversity. Similar ecological processes operate in Australia where dingoes remain present.

### ### Suppression of Foxes and Feral Cats

One of the most significant ecological benefits attributed to dingoes is the suppression of invasive mesopredators, particularly red foxes and feral cats.

Foxes and cats are recognised as major drivers of Australia's mammal extinction crisis. Australia has experienced one of the highest rates of mammal extinction globally, with introduced predators identified as a major contributing factor.

Research has found that areas with stable dingo populations frequently support lower densities or altered behaviour of foxes and cats. Through direct competition, territorial exclusion and behavioural effects, dingoes can reduce the impacts of these invasive predators on native wildlife.

Where dingoes are removed through broad-scale control programs, foxes and cats may increase in abundance or activity, resulting in greater predation pressure on small and medium-sized native mammals, reptiles and birds.

### ### Prevention of Trophic Cascades

The removal of apex predators often triggers trophic cascades, whereby ecological impacts flow through multiple levels of the food web.

In Australia, the reduction of dingo populations can contribute to increases in kangaroos, wallabies, feral goats and other herbivores. Elevated grazing pressure can reduce vegetation cover, inhibit regeneration of native plants, contribute to soil erosion and diminish habitat quality for other species.

By influencing herbivore abundance and behaviour, dingoes help maintain vegetation structure and ecosystem resilience. This role is particularly important in arid and semi-arid regions where ecological systems are highly sensitive to overgrazing.

Evidence from Australian studies suggests that ecosystems containing intact dingo populations often exhibit improved vegetation condition and support greater biodiversity than comparable areas where dingoes have been intensively controlled.

### ### Biodiversity Conservation

Australia continues to experience substantial biodiversity loss despite significant investment in conservation programs. The conservation of functioning ecological processes is increasingly recognised as essential to reversing these trends.

Dingoes contribute to biodiversity conservation by:

- \* Reducing pressure from invasive predators.
- \* Regulating herbivore populations.
- \* Maintaining habitat condition.
- \* Supporting ecosystem resilience following drought, fire and other disturbances.
- \* Preserving natural ecological interactions that have evolved over thousands of years.

Protecting dingoes therefore represents not only the conservation of a native species but also the conservation of an important ecological process.

### ### Consideration of Agricultural Concerns

The impacts of dingoes on livestock are a legitimate concern for some landholders and should not be dismissed. However, livestock protection and dingo conservation are not mutually exclusive objectives.

Modern wildlife management increasingly favours targeted, evidence-based approaches that focus on problem individuals and high-risk areas rather than broad-scale suppression across entire landscapes.

A balanced management framework should seek to minimise livestock losses while retaining the ecological benefits provided by stable dingo populations. Such approaches are more likely to achieve long-term environmental and agricultural outcomes than widespread eradication efforts.

### ### Recommendations

The Inquiry should recommend that:

1. Dingoes be formally recognised as a native apex predator with significant ecological value.
2. Broad-scale lethal control programs be reviewed in light of current ecological evidence.
3. Conservation and biodiversity policies explicitly recognise the ecological services provided by dingoes.
4. Further research be supported into the role of dingoes in regulating invasive predators and maintaining ecosystem health.
5. Land management frameworks encourage coexistence measures and targeted livestock protection strategies where necessary.
6. Government agencies adopt ecosystem-based management approaches that consider the broader ecological consequences of dingo removal.

### ### Conclusion

The scientific evidence supports the conclusion that dingoes play a fundamental role in maintaining ecological balance across Australian landscapes. As Australia's only remaining widespread terrestrial apex predator, dingoes contribute to biodiversity conservation, regulation of invasive species and the maintenance of healthy ecosystems.

Protecting dingoes is therefore not simply a matter of conserving a single species. It is a matter of preserving an ecological process that benefits the broader environment and helps address some of Australia's most pressing biodiversity challenges.

For these reasons, stronger protection and recognition of dingoes within New South Wales environmental and land management policy is warranted.

### ## References

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For a parliamentary inquiry, it can also be effective to add a short closing statement noting that dingo conservation aligns with NSW's biodiversity objectives, natural capital protection, and evidence-based ecosystem management. That helps connect the science directly to policy outcomes the committee is considering.